

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheet of drawings include changes to Fig. 13, to replace the original sheet 6/9.

In Fig. 13, reference number 530 is replaced by reference number 531.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

Remarks

Claims 1-24 were pending. Claims 19-21 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1, 6, 10, 11, 13, and 23 have been amended. New claims 25 and 26 have been added. Support for the claim amendments and new claims can be found in the original claims, especially claims 17, 19 – 20, and Fig. 18 of the specification. Accordingly, claims 1-18, and 22-26 are now pending.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 17, 20, and 22-24 contain allowable subject matter.

Based on the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejections and passage of the claims to allowance.

Specification

The specification has been amended to attend to informalities of grammar and syntax. Support for the amendments to the specification can be found in original figures 1, 2, 7, and 13. In addition, the specification has been amended to correct for obvious errors in the description of the original figures. Applicants respectfully submit that these amendments do not introduce new matter.

Drawings

The drawings were objected to under 37 CFR § 1.83(a). According to page 2 of the office action, "a loading chamber comprising a vessel enclosing the entire length of optical fiber recited in claim 10 must be shown or the feature canceled from the claim." Applicants respectfully point out that original claim 10 of this application does not recite such a feature. Instead, this cited feature was recited in original claim 10 of co-owned application No. 10/028,838, which is also being examined by the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this objection to the drawings.

In addition, Fig. 13 is sought to be amended. Specifically, Fig. 13 incorrectly identified a bolt hole with the reference number 530. This reference number has been replaced by reference number 531. The accompanying specification at page 22, line 25, has also been amended above to reflect this correction.

Claim Objections

Claims 11 and 16 were provisionally objected to as being substantial duplicates of claims 1 and 4. Applicants respectfully submit that by way of the foregoing amendments, amended claims 11 and 16 are not substantial duplicates of claims 1 and 4, respectively. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this provisional objection.

§ 112 Rejections

Claims 3, 5, 10, 14-15, 19 and 21 are rejected under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Applicants respectfully submit that "a loading chamber" is now recited in independent claims 1 and 11, rendering this antecedent basis rejection moot. Regarding the rejection of claim 10, amended claim 10 now recites "wherein the optical fiber is loaded into a reel to reel inline system prior to steps a) – d)." Applicants therefore respectfully submit that the rejection of claims 3, 5, 10, 14-15, 19 and 21 under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, has been overcome, and that the rejection should be withdrawn.

§ 102 Rejections

Claims 1-3, 5-9, 11-15 and 18 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Cullen et al (US Patent 6,146,713). Claims 1-4, 7, 11-2-16, and 18 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(e) as being anticipated by Brennan, III (US Patent 6,311,524). Also, claims 1-5, 11-13, 15-16 and 18 were rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Atkins et al (US Patent 5,930,420).

Without acquiescing to the propriety of the rejection, Applicants respectfully submit that present claims 1 and 11, and their dependent claims, are novel over the cited art because the cited art does not disclose "affixing to the optical fiber at least one pressure seal adapted to contain a gaseous atmosphere within the loading chamber." As mentioned on page 6 of the office action, the prior art "does not disclose affixing the optical fiber a pressure [seal] as is recited in claim 20." Applicants further submit that original claim 19, which also recited the "pressure seal" feature, should also have been identified as containing allowable subject matter (this claim was not specifically mentioned in any of the substantive rejections).

Regarding new claims 25 and 26, these claims recite the features of original claims 22 and 17, respectively, and should be allowable for at least the reasons mentioned in the office action at pages 6-7.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims are in condition for allowance.

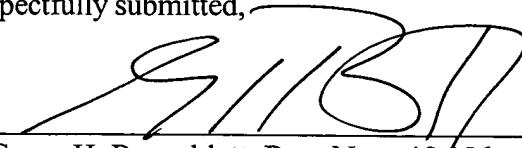
Conclusion

In view of the above, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is requested. Please contact the undersigned should there be any questions or in order to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

1/06/04
Date

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